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Eminem, Dr. Dre Music Allegedly Used To Rattle Detainees In Secret Prison

Prisoners also claim they were held in cells and deprived of sleep, food and clean water.

By Gil Kaufman

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The human-rights advocacy group Human Rights Watch has alleged that the United States operated a secret prison near Afghanistan's capital of Kabul where detainees were kept in dark cells and rattled by loud music, including songs by Eminem and Dr. Dre.

According to the report posted on the group's Web site on Monday, an Ethiopian-born detainee claimed he was kept in a pitch-black prison cell in the facility, referred to as "Dark Prison," and described being forced to listen to hip-hop and heavy metal tunes at a loud volume for 20 straight days, after which the music was replaced by "horrible ghost laughter and Halloween sounds."

The report, based on the accounts of eight detainees at the Guantánamo Bay prison for suspected terrorists in Cuba, also contains claims that prisoners were deprived of sleep, food and clean water and chained to walls and slapped and punched during interrogations. HRW didn't speak to detainees directly, but said it had gotten the accounts of the alleged torture from their lawyers. The detainees claimed to have been held at the Kabul facility between 2002 and 2004.

The prisoners -- who were arrested in other countries in Asia and the Middle East -- said the U.S. and Afghan guards were not in uniform and that U.S. interrogators didn't wear military uniforms. The report suggested that these claims indicate CIA personnel operated the prison. One prisoner, referred to as M.Z., said he was interrogated while shackled to the floor of a room with a strobe light and threatened with rape. The prisoners also claimed that they were held incommunicado and were never permitted visits by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross or other independent officials.

Another detainee, Benyam Mohammad, an Ethiopian-born Guantánamo detainee who grew up in Britain, said he was held at the "dark prison" in 2004 and described his experience to his attorney in English: "It was pitch black, no lights on in the rooms for most of the time. ... They hung me up. I was allowed a few hours of sleep on the second day, then hung up again, this time for two days. My legs had swollen. My wrists and hands had gone numb. ... There was loud music, [Eminem's] "Slim Shady" and Dr. Dre for 20 days.... [Then] they changed the sounds to horrible ghost laughter and Halloween sounds. ... The CIA worked on people, including me, day and night.... Plenty lost their minds. I could hear people knocking their heads against the walls and the doors, screaming their heads off."

"The U.S. government must shed some light on Kabul's 'dark prison,' " said John Sifton, terrorism and counterterrorism researcher at Human Rights Watch in the report. "No one, no matter their alleged crime, should be held in secret prisons or subjected to torture." Despite not interviewing the prisoners directly, HRW said in the report that it believed the allegations were credible enough that they warrant an official investigation.

Human Rights Watch also said that the alleged torture and other mistreatment of detainees, if proven, would amount to serious violations of U.S. criminal law, such as the War Crimes Act and the Anti-Torture Statute, as well as the laws of Afghanistan. It said the mistreatment of detainees also violates the Convention against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which the United States has ratified, as well as the laws of war.

"I can say that we, in fact, are consistent with the commitments of the United States that we don't engage in torture," Vice President Dick Cheney said in an interview broadcast Monday on ABC News' "Nightline." *The Associated Press* reported that Cheney was not responding directly to the Human Rights Watch allegations, but to questions about anti-torture legislation before Congress.

When contacted by *The New York Times*, American military officials in Afghanistan declined to comment on the HRW report and referred all questions to the Department of Defense. A Pentagon spokesman told the paper Sunday night that it would be premature to comment because he had no details of the report. Afghan officials have also denied any knowledge of secret prisons in their country.

The revelation comes just a day after President Bush strongly defended his executive order allowing for secret wiretaps within U.S. borders monitoring people with suspected terrorist ties and a month after *The Washington Post* reported that the U.S. has been keeping terror detainees in secret prisons across Eastern Europe (see [article id="1518503"]"President Bush Defends Secret Wiretaps, Urges Patriot Act Renewal"[/article]).